



“The two countries are now engaged {...} in a full blown war since last tuesday {April 14} when South Sudan’s army occupied the oil-rich region of Heglig in South Kordofan state.”  
- Sudan Tribune



# Sudan: far from resolution

Sudan has a long history of conflicts. Starting in the pre-colonial era, the division between north and south Sudan took place on a basis of classes, races, and religions. It evolved with the colonization and the post-colonization policies in which the North was dominant (Ntwarante, 16). Ethnicities in Sudan are diverse, but the majority of southerners are christians, animists and Black, whereas the majority of northerners are sunnit muslims, and Arabs (Sherbrooke). Because of these differences, racism and Islamic supremacy were the leading rules of the Northern Sudan (Ntwarante, 16).

In the colonial era (before independence in 1956) (Sherbrooke), south and north were separately administered. When the British rulers saw the upcoming independence, they united the two neighbours and left the south in the hands of the Islamic and Arab north. Since then, the south is fighting to gain more independence against assimilation and domination policies. Since then, the north sees the south as a traitor and treats it consequently (Ntwarante, 17).

The civil war officially started in 1956. Up to 1972, it was responsible for at least 500,000 deaths. After a brief breathing space, from 1983 to 2005 another ethnic war entailed 2,000,000 deaths. In Darfur then, from 2003 to 2005, authorities estimated at least 60,000 deaths directly related to the conflict (Sherbrooke).

According to the *Report on the workshop on conflict transformation in Africa*, the internal war created the longest conflict in post-colonial Africa and generated the highest number of internally displaced people, refugees, and exiles (Ntwarante, 17). Currently, the Darfur situation generates the biggest UN mission: 18 000 military people, 6 000 civil servants and 2 700 police advisors coming from 52 countries (Défense nationale).

However, the story of the conflict between the two countries did not only stem from opposing values: South Sudan has an abundant reserve of oil. Historically, the oil was extracted in the south and refined in the north. Since the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 2011, South Sudan is a new country, supposed to be full of «hope for peace and prosperity». In concrete terms, the independence was a way for South Sudan to get a hold on its resources but now the conflict is degenerating because the oil revenues continue to create tension between the two neighbours.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the two countries were engaging in a new war.

To understand the conflict, it is good to look at the escalation of misunderstanding, disagreement and, then, violence between the countries. However, we cannot describe the conflict only in terms of oil barrels and number of deaths. Different actors were and still are on the middle of the fight trying to mediate the dissent. Women for example, among other victims, were mostly touched by the violence. Their contribution to the cessez-le-feu cannot be ignored and it is what I think should be more discussed in the future.

## South and north discussion about oil

In all issues, namely oil, borders, and returnees, both countries argue contradictory ideas and confirm the historical dissent: they do

not seem ready to put many efforts in reaching a consensus.

South Sudan authorities closed down the oil pipeline linking South and North Sudan on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012. Southern stations did not give any explanation to northern ones about what was happening. At this date, the five south stations started cleaning the pipeline, and these were only the first steps of turning off Bashir's valve 10 km south of Hijilij in Sudanese territory. (Al-Sahafah)

Ten days later, February 13<sup>th</sup>, the issue of oil was discussed in Addis Ababa during the round of negotiations between both countries. South Sudan was ready to export its oil through Sudan «as soon as the two sides agree on a trade consensus». (Suna News Agency)

In effect, Khartoum's last proposal for oil in Addis Ababa was not considered legal by South Sudan's delegation. The transport fee offered by Khartoum, 36 dollars for a barrel of oil, was even “provocative” according to Juba, arguing that it did not follow international standards. (Al-Sahafah)

South Sudan government answered that they will agree with negotiations with “an open heart” but cannot pay more than \$0.69 per barrel. South Sudanese mediator also insisted that Khartoum must reimburse Juba for the oil it has seized last year. (Sudan Tribune)

Starting at the end of January, the tables of discussion over the oil issue did not reach any conclusions yet. (Suna News Agency)

However, to meet in Addis Ababa was not to fight a losing battle: South and North Sudan acquiesced upon a date to have a clear border - within three months the demarcation process will be completed, and the two parties agreed on 90 percent of the border. (Sudan news agency)

Around the same time, to cope with the loss of oil from the South Sudan, the Ministry of Finance said that more efforts have to be put toward increasing oil production and creating new oil blocks. The minister of finances expected oil output to increase by 40,000 barrels. (Sudan Vision) The other option faced by Sudan was to attract investments from Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar to increase reserves of foreign currency (Sudan Vision).

## Internal conflict: South Kordofan

In March, Sudan government proved to be not in its best diplomatic shape. In what was called «schizophrenic swings» by an observer, Sudan president Umar Al-Bashir endangered the American-Sudanese relation after he attacked Washington on its hidden politi-



cal agenda. “We do not want your carrot because it is rotten and poisoned. As for your stick, we do not fear it because we tried it before” Bashir declared on March 5<sup>th</sup>. (Al-Sahafah)

This call was directed toward the UN mission in Sudan. The US and UN work on securing Sudan's border states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile since the fighting displaced 417,000 people. UN Security Council expressed its concern over “rising levels of malnutrition and food insecurity”. UN asks Sudanese government and rebels to accept international aid, a request that Sudanese government rejects on the basis of America supporting rebels in Sudan. (Sudan Tribune) In effect, the support of rebel by other countries is one of the cornerstones of the conflict in South Kordofan, a region devastated by fight between Sudan army and rebel groups.

«We understand the conspiracy of the West to ignite war and to disintegrate the country. We are ready to carry our responsibilities fully beside the armed forces so as to reach the desired victory.»

-Sudanese Minister of Defence, Feb 20th, 2012

«This week the Sudanese president suggested that tensions reached a level which makes the scenario of war a real possibility.»

-Sudan Tribune, Feb 6th, 2012

Mahmoud claimed that US concerns over famine are “bargaining chip” against the government and an attempt to deteriorate its reputation. Khartoum considered this external presence as international pressure. Furthermore, the ultimate hypothesized goal of the US is to divide South Kordofan and Blue Nile as well as giving “Abyei to South Sudan”. (Sudan Tribune)

Sudan's Minister of International Cooperation, Ishraqa Said Mahmoud told the US that “unless they quit their propaganda of famine in the three areas, we will expel them”. (Sudan Tribune)

In a contradictory way, by the same time (March 8<sup>th</sup>), Sudan ensured its entire collaboration with United Nations and African Union regarding the issue between South and North Sudan. Ambassador of Sudan provided examples in which Sudan shows good intention of cooperation, like the acceptance of Southern Sudanese students. (Sudan Vision) Obviously, Sudan was not really to be friend with South Sudan.

On Monday March 26<sup>th</sup> Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) bombed oil fields located 20 km from Rukotana town in South Sudan. The Sudanese Vice-President Youssef accused South Sudan of “plotting to control Heglig from the very beginning to prevent Sudan from using the oil wells”. (Sudan Tribune)

Sudan official army spokesman of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) Al-Sawarmi Khalid Sa'ad stated that SAF prevented the South Sudan Army, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) of achieving their goal of occupying oil-rich Hijij area. (Suna news agency)

Sudan has a long history of fearing the north helping rebels in the south and vice versa. The conflict of oil is no exception: Al-Bashir made South Sudan responsible for the attack in Hijlig and Talodi towns in South Kurdufan, after presumed rebel groups devastated the region. Al-Bashir accused South Sudan of arming the Sudan People's liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N). The Sudanese president asked his southern neighbour to “stop attacks on Sudanese territories”. (Suna news agency)

The Sudanese armed forces killed many attackers and destroyed their material (tanks, four-wheel, B-10 rockets...), most of whom were officers and soldiers of South Sudan's army. “This resulted in their humiliating withdrawal towards the South”, stated the SAF.

(Suna news agency)

March 27<sup>th</sup>, the SAF has taken full control of Hijlij, oil town in Kurdufan state, as well as other oil producing areas. (Sudanese Media Centre)

Following the recent escalation of violence between South and North Sudan in Heglig, the Sudanese National Assembly announced on April 16<sup>th</sup> that Sudan will now confront the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) “until [it] will rule of the South”. Sudanese president Omer Hassan al-Bashir said that “there will be no negotiation without a withdrawal [of South Sudan] (Sudan tribune).

In South Sudan, Information Minister Barnaba Marial Benjamin told the media that the decision by the Sudanese National Assembly was ‘unfortunate’, saying that South Sudan never considered itself as Sudan enemy (Sudan tribune).

## What's next?

It was predictable: Sudan and South Sudan will not sign a peace treaty as long as the two countries are dependent from one another. Their natural resources, mostly oil takes a big part in the conflict that goes on for decades now. However, beyond the economical and political actors, who are those that make sure that life goes on? Who are the merchants, the families, the young and the old, men and women that live in this country overwhelmed by violence?

Sudanese women take part in the everyday action against violence and war. In 1994, the Sudanese Women's Association in Nairobi (SWAN) gathered women in the Kenya diaspora to create a place for women to share their impression and thoughts about peace, human rights, and development (Ntwarante, 17).

The same year, in Sudan itself, women started to mobilise to find solutions to the war. By telling their daily lives and reciting poems, they were «urging men to stop the war and solve problems using non-violent methods». They also sent recommendations to the Sudanese People's Defence Front to ensure women and children were protected in all army interventions (Ntwarante, 17). To restore peace, women in north and south are ready to work together and this should more explore.

For now, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funds mostly emergency aid in Sudan (CIDA). From my point of view, in a context of war being around since 1956, if emergency aid is still relevant, it is no longer sufficient. If Canada wants to be involved in the peacemaking process and funds projects – which initiative is debatable anyway, the efforts should switch from food programs to women projects, for example. Women can be agent of change in armed conflict (see success stories in Ntwarante). Their implication in peace building is essential but is often overlooked.

To be fair, CIDA devotes at least one project (\$19,484,700) especially for women: «Strengthening Midwifery Services». But women are not only mothers; they are also citizens, and raising their education levels to strengthen their political participation is also a priority in this internal war that last for too long.